


Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: February 11, 2003
Date Submitted: February 6, 2003

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Parwez Alam, County Administrator 
Vincent Long, Assistant County Administrator

Subject: Ratification of Board Actions Taken at the January 21, 2003 Workshop on the allocation of funds pursuant to the "Dori Slosberg Driver's Education Safety Act" (Leon County Ordinance #2002-20).

Statement of Issue:

This agenda item requests ratification of Board actions taken at the January 21, 2003 Workshop on the allocation of funds pursuant to the "Dori Slosberg Driver's Education Safety Act" (Leon County Ordinance #2002-20).

Background:

At their regularly scheduled meeting on September 24, 2002, the Board held a public hearing and adopted Ordinance #2002-20 providing for an Additional \$3.00 civil traffic penalty in Leon County effective October 1, 2002. At that time, the Board did not specify how these funds would be appropriated. On October 22, 2002, the Board scheduled a workshop to consider the various methods by which the Board may allocate the additional civil traffic penalty funds.

On January 21, 2003, the Board of County Commissioners held a Workshop to discuss the alternatives available to expend funds collected under Ordinance #2002-20, or the "Dori Slosberg Driver's Education Safety Act". This workshop was initially scheduled for December 10, 2002, but was rescheduled to accommodate the schedules of workshop participants (Attachment #1).

Analysis:

The Board reviewed information regarding existing driver's education programs in Leon County and revenue estimates for funds collected under Ordinance #2002-20, as provided by staff. After discussion, the Board approved the following actions:

- Accept the findings presented in the Workshop.
- Form a "Driver's Education" Committee (Committee), to consist of the following members:
 - Leon County Commissioner Cliff Thael, or his designee,
 - Leon County Public Schools Superintendent Bill Montford, or his designee,
 - Paul Burrell, President, Partners for Highway Safety,
 - Jeff Hogan, Instructor of Driver's Education at Florida High.
- Direct the Committee to further analyze drivers education opportunities in Leon County and to develop an expenditure plan that includes the Leon County Public School system, the Partners for Highway Safety, and any other companies or schools that could enter into a public/private partnership with the Board.
- Request that the Committee report back to the Board with its findings and recommendations within sixty days, or by March 21, 2003.

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The Committee held its first meeting on January 30, 2003, and is developing a plan that meets the direction provided by the Board, as outlined on Page #1, above.

Options:

1. Ratify the Board action taken at the January 21, 2003, Workshop on the allocation of funds pursuant to the "Dori Slosberg Driver's Education Safety Act" (Leon County Ordinance #2002-20).
2. Do not ratify action taken by the Board at the January 21, 2003, Workshop.
3. Board direction.

Recommendation:

Option #1

Attachments:

1. Workshop on the allocation of funds pursuant to the "Dori Slosberg Driver's Education Safety Act" (Leon County Ordinance #2002-20) [without workshop attachments].

PA/VL/BHP/bhp

Board of County Commissioners

Leon County, Florida

Workshop on the allocation of funds pursuant to the
“Dori Slosberg Driver’s Education Safety Act”
(Leon County Ordinance #2002-20).

*Tuesday, January 21, 2002
1:30 - 2:30 p.m.*

Leon County Board of County Commission Chambers
Leon County Courthouse, 5th Floor

Board of County Commissioners Workshop Item

Date of Meeting: December 10, 2002
Date Submitted: December 5, 2002

TO: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

FROM: Parwez Alam, County Administrator *PA*
Vincent Long, Assistant County Administrator *VL*

SUBJECT: Workshop on the Allocation of funds pursuant to the "Dori Slosberg Driver's Education Safety Act" (Leon County Ordinance #2002-20).

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

This workshop item presents information on the additional civil traffic penalty funds collected pursuant to the Dori Slosberg Driver's Education Safety Act and seeks Board direction on how such funds should be appropriated.

BACKGROUND:

During their 2002 regular session, the Florida Legislature passed the "Dori Slosberg Driver's Education Safety Act." In part, this Act enabled county governments to adopt an ordinance expanding the civil traffic penalty fines for traffic violations by an additional three dollars and required that these funds be used for drivers education programs at public and nonpublic schools (Attachment #1).

At their regularly scheduled meeting on September 24, 2002, the Board held a public hearing and adopted Ordinance #2002-20 providing for an Additional \$3.00 civil traffic penalty in Leon County effective October 1, 2002. At that time, the Board did not specify how these funds would be appropriated (Attachment #2).

At their regularly scheduled meeting on October 22, 2002, the Board scheduled a workshop for December 10, 2002, to consider the different methods and programs by which the Board may allocate the additional civil traffic penalty funds for drivers education purposes in Leon County.

ANALYSIS:

This workshop item presents information on the various drivers education programs that currently exist in Leon County, estimates the level of traffic penalty revenues anticipated from and the appropriate level of expenditures for these funds.

The Dori Slosberg Drivers Education Safety Act (Act) was authored by Representative Irving Slosberg in order to create additional funding mechanisms for student driver education programs across the state. The legislation was created to prevent teen deaths behind the wheel through preventative youth drivers education programs. Representative Slosberg and his staff have spent the 2002 interim traveling across the state advocating for each county to adopt the additional \$3 traffic penalty allowed under the Act. To date, 23 counties, including Leon, have adopted an ordinance implementing this additional traffic penalty fine (Attachment #3).

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ADDITIONAL CIVIL TRAFFIC PENALTY BUDGET ESTIMATE FOR FY 02/03:

To estimate the revenues that will be generated through Leon County Ordinance #2002-20, staff utilized data provided by the Leon County Clerk of Courts. Table #1, below, presents an overview of how many traffic tickets have actually been written over the past five years. The table also presents information on how many of these traffic fines have actually been paid and therefore the level of revenue that can conservatively be anticipated in FY 02/03 through the additional \$3 fine.

Table #1: Leon County Traffic Fine Information and Budget Estimate for FY 02/03:

	Actual FY 97/98	Actual FY 98/99	Actual FY 99/00	Actual FY 00/01	FY 01/02	Estimated FY 02/03
Traffic Fines Written	41,143	39,328	41,034	52,842	46,990 (Actual)	45,000
Traffic Fines Paid	Data not available	Data not available	33,211	41,501	35,250* (Estimate)	33,750
Percentage of Fines that were Paid	Data not available	Data not available	81%	79%	75%** (Estimate)	75%**
Revenues from additional \$3 fee on Traffic Fines	Data not available	Data not available	\$99,633	\$124,503	\$105,750 (Estimate)	\$101,250

* At end of November 2002, there were 31,108 Actual Fines Paid in Leon County, but this number was expected to rise, as estimated above, through the end of December 2002.

** In order to protect against overestimating anticipated revenues, staff utilized the lower 75% collection rate for the purposes of this budget analysis.

According to this analysis, staff estimates that the estimated 45,000 tickets written in Leon County between October 1, 2002 and September 30, 2003, will have a collection rate of 75%, generating just over \$100,000 for use in expanding drivers education in Leon County. However, due to a three-month "lag" of payment of these fines, staff estimates the County will only receive full payment on three quarters of these anticipated revenues, or approximately \$75,000 for FY 02/03. Therefore, staff recommends the Board budget \$75,000 for the purposes of Ordinance #2002-20 during FY 02/03. The estimated \$25,000 that will continue to be collected through the end of December 30, 2003, will be used during the 2003/2004 fiscal year budget.

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING DRIVERS EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN LEON COUNTY:

Schools across the country offer driver education programs to students to better prepare them for the dangers of driving. Drivers education programs for students exist in Leon County, but additional revenues are continuously sought to improve these programs (Attachment #4).

The following sections present an overview of the drivers education programs that currently exist for young drivers in Leon County:

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Leon County School Board (Public Schools):

The Leon County School Board currently offers drivers education programs for 1,297 students, annually, at each of its five high schools across Leon County (Leon, Rickards, Godby, Lincoln, and Chiles High Schools). The drivers education program, in its current form, has existed for over 10 years as an elective for qualifying students (students 15 years or older who have a learners permit). This program is also available to home school students year round at the high school of the child's choice and is available as a fee-based summer course to students attending private schools in Leon County.

However, funding for these programs has been extremely limited. For the current fiscal year, funding for the operating and capital outlay portions of the program's budget for every school, combined will total an estimated \$10,000 (Funding for the salaries and wages of the drivers education instructors are covered in separate parts of each school's budget). In essence, each school has only \$2,000 each year to purchase, maintain, and operate its vehicle fleet, purchase books, videos and other class materials and buy cones, signs, or communication equipment for the driving range. It is important to note that maintenance costs of the working vehicles, alone, was over \$8,000 during the previous fiscal year.

Due to insurance and other liabilities of leaving the school site, the course's instruction is confined to driving ranges at each high school. The driving ranges are relatively small, consisting only of limited portions of existing parking lots at most schools. A student's time on the existing range is also limited as there are only (under current best-case scenarios) two working cars at each school and many of those have significant maintenance problems. Also, budget shortfalls prohibit the purchase of modern communication technology that would enable an instructor to communicate with numerous students in different vehicles, across the course, at one time. Therefore, in a class of many students, each student may only be on the range and behind the wheel for a small amount of time during any given week of overall drivers education instruction. Other range problems include minimal funding for cones, bullhorns and (significantly) cars and/or car simulators.

Funding also affects classroom instruction as more of the materials utilized in the class, such as books, videos, charts and other instruction materials over time become dated, degraded and sometimes lost. School Board representatives have indicated that an increase of funding for drivers education, through the Board of County Commissioners, could dramatically improve the quality and quantity of their drivers education programs (for more information about drivers education programs at Leon County School Board public schools, please see Attachment #5).

Florida High (Public School):

Commonly thought of as a private school, Florida High School is a public school that receives the majority of its funding through the Florida Department of Education and is associated with the Florida State University. Florida High does not receive this state funding through the Leon County School Board, but directly from the Department, as it is considered to be its own district by the state. The drivers education program at Florida High is very similar to the program offered by the Leon County School Board. The school has purchased its own vehicle and offers a mix of classroom and driving range instruction. However, funding for this program is supplemented by the mandatory activity fee that each Florida High student pays, annually, and is only offered to Florida High students.

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Florida High administrators have expressed an interest in expanding funding for their drivers education program through the provisions of the new County ordinance. However, Florida High officials acknowledge that as their students do come from counties across the big bend region, insuring that these new Leon County revenues do not supplant funding for, nor are spent on, students from other regional counties may prove difficult.

Similar in structure to Florida High is FAMU High School. FAMU High is another public high school in Leon County that is associated with a local university but receives a majority of its funding through the state Department of Education. However, FAMU High does not currently offer a drivers education program.

Leon County Private Schools:

Currently, there is only one private high school in Leon County that offers a drivers education program for its students. The program offered at Maclay School is similar to those offered at Leon County Public Schools but is better funded as it is funded through revenues generated by private school fees. The school employs one staffperson who teaches the school's students in classroom, in-car driving range, and on-the-road instruction. In addition, the school owns, operates and maintains its own fleet of three vehicles for this program. Maclay also pays for insurance while students are driving outside of school grounds.

Partners for Highway Safety:

The Partners for Highway Safety Foundation (PHS) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) youth traffic safety organization that was founded in Leon County in 1992. The organization has created a number of educational and training programs that target improving the driving of teenagers and operates across the southeastern U.S. PHS offers its programs by visiting schools and offering courses at closed, large driving ranges that can actively simulate real life driving conditions, such as the driving range at the Pat Thomas Law Enforcement Academy. It is estimated that these PHS programs have benefitted the driving skills of over 10,000 Leon County teenagers over the past decade.

The focus of every PHS program is on improving the actual driving skills and techniques of teenagers in real life and practical driving scenarios, while utilizing the most current methodologies and teaching materials towards this end objective. This is achieved through utilization of a high level of on-the-road practice and instruction.

Although PHS is not a Leon County public or non-public school and therefore is not eligible to receive these County funds directly, PHS is an award winning foundation that has made significant advances in the science of instructing teenagers in safe driving. PHS is included in this analysis as it may be feasible for one or more public or private Leon County schools to form a public/private partnership that does use these County funds, but incorporates the "on-the-road experience" teaching methodologies of the PHS (Attachment #6).

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OVERVIEW OF FUNDING ALTERNATIVES:

The most current information on the implementation of the Act establishes that many counties that have passed ordinances implementing the Act normally contract with their county school board to supplement and expand (not supplant funding for) drivers education programs at county schools. Of the 23 counties that have implemented the act, 10 have contracted directly with their county school board for program implementation. An additional three counties have created a grant process open to both public school boards and private schools. The remaining nine counties (including Leon County) have yet to determine how they will expend these funds and one county had not responded at the time of printing.

As discussed previously, in accordance with the state provisions of the Act and Leon County Ordinance #2002-20, the Board must flow these funds directly to public or nonpublic schools to fund drivers (traffic) education program instruction and not administrative expenses. However, in addition to the direction of these funds to schools for drivers education programs, it would be possible for the Board to form a public/private partnership to improve drivers education in Leon County. Such a public/private partnership could include the Board, one or more public or nonpublic schools, and a private organization or business (such as the Partners for Highway Safety).

Public/private partnerships between government agencies and local businesses and organizations have formed in a few other counties to further improve the driver's education programs. In Palm Beach County, the School Board has created a partnership with a local gas station to provide free goods and services to drivers education vehicles. In Liberty County, the School Board has partnered with the Sheriff's Office to borrow used vehicles for the school ranges. Although discussions of forming a public/private partnership have occurred amongst a number of Commissioners, School Board members, and local organization leaders over the past month, nothing formal has been prepared nor finalized at the time of this writing for inclusion as part of this workshop packet (Attachment #7).

To expend funds collected under Leon County Ordinance #2002-20, the Board may choose to direct staff to negotiate a contract with the Leon County School Board for the remainder of FY 02/03 to provide for expanded direct driver education programs at Leon County Public Schools. Should the Board select this option, staff recommends the contract be negotiated in an amount no greater than \$75,000. Under this scenario, staff would also recommend that the contract delineates that drivers education programs at these public high schools be available to all public, nonpublic (private) and/or home-schooled students, and that the contract otherwise be in accordance with Leon County Ordinance #2002-20 (Please see Option #3, on Page #6).

The Board may also choose to direct staff to negotiate a contract with another public or nonpublic school or schools for FY 02/03, in an amount to be determined by the Board, for expanded direct driver education programs (Please see Option #4, on Page #6).

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OPTIONS:

1. Accept the findings presented in this Workshop.
2. Direct staff to form a public/private partnership with one or more public and/or nonpublic school(s) and one or more private organization(s) as one element of the Board's plan to improve driver education programs in Leon County, in accordance with Ordinance #2002-20.
3. Direct staff to negotiate a contract with the Leon County School Board for FY 02/03, in the amount of \$75,000, to provide for expanded direct driver education programs at Leon County Public Schools that is available to all public, nonpublic (private) and/or home-schooled students, in accordance with Ordinance #2002-20 and authorize staff to prepare the appropriate budget action to realize the \$75,000 in the FY 02/03 budget.
4. Direct staff to negotiate a contract with another public or nonpublic school or schools for FY 02/03, in an amount to be determined by the Board, for expanded direct driver education programs, in accordance with Ordinance #2002-20 and authorize staff to prepare the appropriate budget action to realize the determined budget amount in the FY 02/03 budget.
5. Board Direction.

RECOMMENDATION:

Options #1 and #5

Attachments:

1. "Dori Slosberg Driver Education Safety Act" as enrolled, CS/HB 261, 3rd Engrossed, 2002
2. Leon County Ordinance #2002-20, relating to Additional Civil Traffic Penalties
3. Spreadsheet on status of Act's implementation statewide (by Rep. Slosberg's Office)
4. Tallahassee Democrat Article on drivers education programs, dated November 14, 2002
5. Information on Leon County School Board drivers education programs
6. Information on Partners for Highway Safety Foundation
7. November 5, 2002 from Commissioner Grippa to Superintendent Montford relating to public/private partnerships and the Partners for Highway Safety Foundation

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